(g) if so, the details thereof with action taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The information on State-wise names of irrigation projects pending with the Central Government under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is being compiled and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) to (e) The delays in taking final decision on the proposals generally take place due to incomplete information furnished by the State Governments on various points including in respect of making equivalent non-forest land available for compensatory afforestation. As and when all essential details in respect of the proposal are received, they are examined expeditiously for final decision.

(f) and (g) A reference has been recently received from Shri Suresh R. Jadhav, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, for keeping irrigation project works out of the purview of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. The issue has been examined by the Ministry and it has been found that such exemption will require amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Since implementation of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is one of the issues presently under consideration of Hon'ble Supreme Court, no further action on the matter can be taken till final judgement in the case.

Pollution by Thermal Power Plants

844. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the three thermal power plants in the capital account for almost 16 percent of the air pollutants floating in Delhi's atmosphere;

(b) whether small industries scattered all over Delhi including the thickly populated residential areas, are also responsible for the air pollution and their industrial waste is causing toxic materials to be leached in the soil, affecting ground water course; and

(c) if so, the steps the Government propose to take in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) to (c) According to Central Pollution Control Board the Industries contribute to about 29 per cent of air pollution load generated in Delhi, out of which 16 per cent is contributed by the three thermal power plants. Untreated industrial effluents may leach in to the soil and contaminate ground water. The steps taken/proposed to be taken to prevent and control air and water pollution problems posed by power plants and industries located in Delhi include the following:

— Directions have been issued to the three thermal power plants in Delhi under Section 5 to the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to submit detailed action plan for utilisation of flyash.

— Use of superior quality of coal has been suggested till availability of beneficiated coal.

— A notification on use of beneficiated coal by thermal power plants has been issued on 19th September, 1997 which would be effective from Ist June, 2001.

— Shifting of polluting industries from non-conforming areas to the conforming areas.

— Construction and commissioning of 15 common effluent treatment plants in the industrial estates at a cost of about Rs. 90 crores. Out of which Rs. 50 crores have already been made available as subsidy by the Central Government and Delhi Government.

[Translation]

Facilities at Tourist Spots in Delhi

845. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the tourists, other citizens and institutions have complained about uncleanliness and low standard facilities at the tourists spots and other places in Delhi where the tourists are lodged because the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is not being provided with the adequate financial aid according to its demands;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Supreme Court has made certain recommendations and expressed concern over the such matters during the hearing of public interest petitions;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Government propose to implement any time bound preventive action plan in this regard;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) the time by which it would be finalised?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIKANTA JANA): (a) No such complaint has been received by the Department of Tourism.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has directed the local bodies to improve the state of cleanliness in Delhi so as to satisfactorily ensure the collection, transportation and disposal of garbage/waste and also the construction/installation of incinerators in all the hospitals/Nursing Homes with 50 beds and above. However, no specific directions have been given for tourist spots in particular.

(e) and (f) Number of steps have been taken by the NCT Delhi Government through local bodies to keep the

city clean such as collection of garbage, desilting of drains, hospital waste to be incinerated in the hospital itself, construction of new dustbins etc.

(g) All corrective measures are being taken on day-today basis by the local bodies.

[English]

DOT Probes VSNL Payment

846. SHRI SANAT MEHTA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "DOT probes VSNL payment to Iridium" appearing in "Indian Express", dated May 18,1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) and (c) Case has been made over to Vigilance Cell for detailed investigations. Necessary action will be taken based on the findings.

Pollution by Fire Crackers

847. SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROIT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether burning of fire crackers every year have created imbalance in the environment;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to ban burning to fire crackers in the major cities in view of pollution; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by the Government in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Bursting of fire crackers/fire works leads to high noise levels and air pollution problems.

(b) and (c) Instructions have been sent to the concerned authorities of the major cities suggesting restrictions on use of fire crackers which produce noise of more than 100 decibels at 4 meter distance. Steps proposed for checking pollution due to fire crackers include consideration of the following :

(i) Banning of bursting of crackers between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.;

(ii) Bursting of crackers are to be permitted only during public festivals and in designated areas; and

(iii) Banning of manufacture and bursting of joined crackers.

Ethylene Oxide - An Environment Hazard

848. SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether sterilisation of medical products and devices which is carried out mainly with ethylene oxide is a serious environmental hazard and sterilisation with ethylene oxide also poses a threat to the workers working in ethylene oxide sterilisation plants;

(b) if so, whether presently there is any provision in India, statutory or otherwise, to prevent the release of ethylene oxide and counter gas in the air after the sterilisation process is over and to protect the workers against the hazards of employment in ethylene oxide plants; and

(c) if not, the steps proposed to be taken to deal with this problem?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) to (c) Sterilisation process by using ethylene oxide takes place in closed circuits and as such the release of this gas is controlled. The ethylene oxide is a toxic gas and its contact may cause irritation of eyes and skin. The tolerance level of 5ppm of ethylene oxide in air has been reported by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, USA. The ethylene oxide is regulated under the explosive Act, 1884 when handled in large quantity.

[Translation]

Appraisal of Programmes

849. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY: Will the Minister fo HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have reviewed the programmes like providing uniforms and mid-day meals free of cost to the poor studetns upto the 8th class;

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government for the implementation of said programmes in Bihar;

(c) the number of districts in Bihar where these programmes are being implemented; and

(d) the details of Central assistance provided to States for these programmes, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MUHI RAM SAIKIA): (a) to (c) The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, popularly known as Mid-day Meals Scheme, was launched on 15th August, 1995. It has been extended to cover students of Primary Classes (I-V) in all the blocks/ districts including urban areas in Bihar from 1997-98 studying in Government, Government-Aided and Local Body schools.